THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI JASWANT SINGH): (a) and (b) No formal request for Membership of the Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group was received by India.

China's capability to make Neutron Bomb

1576. SHRI RAJUBHAI A. PARMAR:
SHRIMATI VEENA VERMA:

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government's attention had been drawn to the report in the Indian Express of July 16, 1999, stating that China had announced that it had mastered the technology to build a neutron bomb;

(b) if so, Government's reaction and response thereto, in the context of peace in this sub-continent and global peace; and

(c) what is the reaction of other nuclear weapon states including US and UK?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI JASWANT SINGH): (a) Yes, Sir. In the context of the allegations of espionage by China at US nuclear weapons laboratories, the Chinese government published selective details of its nuclear weapons programme, including the capability to make an enhanced radiation weapon (neutron bomb).

(b) Government monitors carefully strategic modernisation programmes in the region and beyond. Government remains fully committed to taking all necessary steps to effectively safeguard India's security and national interests in accordance with its own threat perceptions.

(c) The US has said that the Chinese nuclear capability was no secret and that the annou ncement did not come; as a surprise. The UK indicated that it was hard to see how the development of such weapons contributed towards the global elimiination of nuclear weapons. There has been no official reaction from Russia and France.